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Service

**Wildlife
Services**

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WILDLIFE SERVICES—COLORADO

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USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in Colorado

Every day, residents, industries, organizations and agencies call on Colorado Wildlife Services (WS) for help in protecting agriculture, human health and safety, natural resources, and property from damage or threats posed by wildlife. WS' professional wildlife biologists respond to these requests with effective, selective, and humane strategies to resolve wildlife conflicts.

WS employees help Colorado's livestock industry reduce losses from predators. The program assists property owners with migratory bird problems and helps them obtain the proper permits from the appropriate agency as necessary. WS also assists with beaver damage issues which occur across the state. In addition, the Colorado program assists the State Health Department and Colorado Division of Wildlife with monitoring efforts to detect plague and other wildlife diseases. Also, WS provides assistance to several airports across the state to protect air passengers and aircraft from dangerous wildlife collisions with aircraft.

Applying Science & Expertise to Wildlife Challenges

WS offers information, advice, equipment, and materials that enable many people to resolve wildlife conflicts on their own. Often, this *technical assistance* can be provided over the phone. WS also provides on-site expertise, or *direct assistance*, to manage complex wildlife problems that cannot be safely resolved by others. To support this effort, WS conducts *scientific research* across the Nation to develop answers to new problems posed by wildlife and to ensure the program benefits from the latest science and technology. The Colorado WS Program, with assistance from other states and the National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC), staffs an exhibit at the



National Western Stock Show each year. This exhibit gives the WS Program the opportunity for exposure to livestock producers across the nation, as well as the opportunity to educate the general public regarding wildlife conflict issues.

Protecting Livestock—Livestock production is an important industry in Colorado. In January of 2004, the total value of Colorado's cattle and calves was \$2.2 billion, and the value of the State's sheep inventory was \$41.76 million. In addition to many factors that cause economic hardships for livestock producers, including the recent drought, predator attacks by coyotes, black bears, and mountain lions can result in significant losses for some producers. In FY 2000, the Colorado branch of the National Agricultural Statistics Service reported that Colorado livestock producers lost an estimated 19,500 sheep and lambs to predators. This was in spite of the fact that many, approximately 80 percent, of these same producers reported using nonlethal predator deterrent tools (NASS, 1997). The value of this loss was placed at \$1.49 million. Research suggests that these losses could be 2 to 3 times higher in the absence of an effective livestock protection program. Colorado WS works cooperatively with the Colorado Division of Wildlife, Colorado Department of Agriculture, counties, and local livestock associations to provide assistance to livestock producers with predation from coyotes, black bears, mountain lions and other predators as needed.

Protecting Aircraft and Passengers—Every year, lives are endangered worldwide and billions of dollars are wasted when birds and other wildlife damage aircraft. Experts estimated that bird strikes with aircraft cost civil aviation more than \$300 billion annually.

The WS Program is recognized internationally for its scientific expertise in reducing wildlife hazards to the aviation industry. NWRC conducts research to understand the nature of wildlife hazards at airports, develop management tools to reduce these hazards, and

Top 5 Major Assistance Activities:

- Protecting livestock from predation from coyotes, black bears, and mountain lions
- Protecting civil and military aviation from wildlife strikes
- Managing damage caused by migratory birds
- Monitoring for plague and other wildlife diseases
- Protecting property from beaver damage

Top 5 WS Research Projects of Interest to Colorado

- Improving predator damage management methods
- Defining and reducing wildlife hazards to aviation
- Managing bird predation to aquaculture
- Evaluating waterfowl as disease, parasite, and noxious weed reservoirs
- Managing wildlife diseases (e.g. Chronic Wasting Disease, West Nile Virus, Plague)

provide airport personnel with information to control or prevent these potential risks. WS also maintains the National Bird Strike Database used by the Federal Aviation Administration and airports to monitor trends and wildlife species that pose the greatest threat to aviation.

Applying this scientific expertise, the Colorado WS program provided assistance at six airports in FY 2004. In addition, to providing training and advice, WS also worked on-site to resolve wildlife conflicts. For these airports, the most significant risk to human lives is the presence of wildlife lingering on or around the airfields. Therefore, most WS efforts focus on reducing the presence of wildlife in these areas.

Protecting Threatened and Endangered Wildlife—During the past few years Colorado WS has assisted the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service with the reintroduction of the black-footed ferret. The Fish and Wildlife Service in cooperation with WS, the Bureau of Land Management, Colorado Division of Wildlife, and the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources has cooperated in the process of reestablishing a self-sustaining population in northwest Colorado and northeast Utah. On November 15, 2001, black-footed ferrets were released for the first time into the Wolf Creek area of northwest Colorado. The Colorado WS program continues to cooperate with this group by collecting blood samples from coyotes to determine the presence of plague, which is a threat to the success of the reintroduction. The survival of black-footed ferrets in the release area was documented in this area during FY 2004.

During FY 2003 the WS program was requested by the Colorado Division of Wildlife to assist in the capture of a Canada lynx which had been located in an area not considered lynx habitat. The lynx had been observed in poor physical condition, and it was feared the lynx would die of starvation. WS captured the lynx which was immobilized and returned to the CDOW and returned to their rehabilitation facility. The lynx subsequently returned to the wild after regaining the weight it had lost. This particular lynx would have been lost to the reintroduction program if it had not been recaptured.

Chronic Wasting Disease Issues Management—The Colorado WS Program has assisted the Colorado Division of Wildlife with the management and surveillance of deer and elk for the presence of chronic wasting disease. In FY 2002 the WS Program provided assistance to the Division of Wildlife in removing mule deer and elk from an area of the state where chronic wasting disease was first detected on the western part of the state. This was an effort to control the spread in a new area where it was thought a new area of infection had been detected. WS has continued to assist the Division with obtaining samples to test for the presence of chronic wasting disease across the state.

Protecting Property from Beaver Damage—Protecting transportation, agriculture, and natural resources through beaver damage

Major Cooperators

- Colorado Department of Agriculture
- Colorado Division of Wildlife
- Colorado Department of Transportation
- Southern Ute Tribe
- Denver International Airport
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- Counties
- Livestock Associations

management is a major consideration for WS in Colorado. Historically, beaver were considered a valuable natural resource and an extremely important part of the economy. In recent years, however, little demand for beaver products has resulted in a decrease in trapping, and subsequent increase in beaver numbers. Beaver now occupy nearly all watersheds in the State. Typical requests for assistance involved damage to roadways and bridges, agriculture and forest resources, and flooding of municipal sewer and water treatment facilities. In FY 2003 the Colorado WS Program entered into a Cooperative Agreement with the Colorado Department of Transportation to provide assistance in controlling beaver damage statewide.

WS routinely uses explosives to remove beaver dams that are flooding property. Before using explosives, Colorado WS personnel are trained and certified in the safe and effective use of explosives.

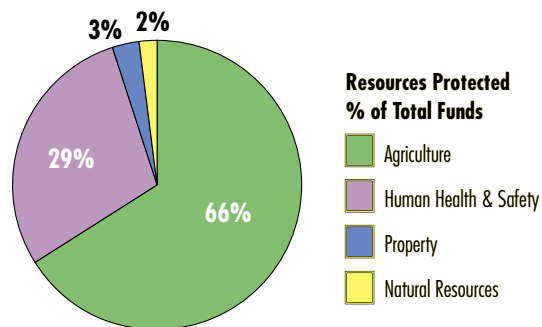
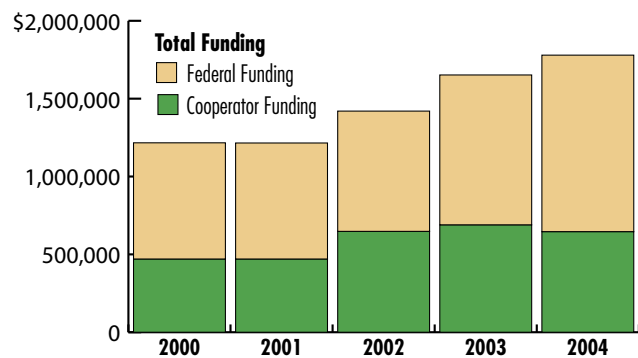
Looking to the Future

In Colorado, public safety is a concern for wildlife managers. This is particularly true at airports. Additional attention must be given to this very specialized area of work.

As Colorado's population continues to grow, especially in more rural areas, the potential for human-wildlife conflicts is increasing. WS' ability to respond to this growing need for services will depend on the availability of critical resources, especially the necessary funding.

Colorado Wildlife Research Funding

In addition to receiving federally allocated funds, WS also receives money from cooperators; such as producers; private individuals; businesses; and other Federal, State, and Local government agencies who have a vested interest in the program. In most cases, these cooperators need help to resolve wildlife damage problems or they play a role in wildlife damage management.



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